

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Custer Battlefield National Monument MRA

State Big Horn Co., MT

for COVER William B. Bushong 5/1/87

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

1. Custer Battlefield Historic District

for Keeper

Attest

William B. Bushong
5/1/87

2. Reno--Benteen Battlefield

for Keeper

Attest

William B. Bushong
5/1/87

3.

Keeper

Attest

4.

Keeper

Attest

5.

Keeper

Attest

6.

Keeper

Attest

7.

Keeper

Attest

8.

Keeper

Attest

9.

Keeper

Attest

10.

Keeper

Attest

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

—EXCELLENT

—DETERIORATED

X ~~GOOD~~ 1 1001

—RUINS

—FAIR

—UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

—UNALTERED

X ~~ALTERED~~

CHECK ONE

X ~~ORIGINAL SITE~~

—MOVED

DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Custer Battlefield National Monument, an area comprising more than 760 acres, is on the east bank of the Little Bighorn River in Big Horn County, Montana. The acreage is divided into two separate parcels of land. These two parcels are the Custer Battlefield proper, a portion of which has been designated Custer Battlefield Historic District, which contains the "Last Stand" site and National Cemetery, and the Reno-Benteen Battlefield, which is located 5 miles south, and consists of a plot of roughly 162 acres. The land between the two battlefields is under private ownership. The entire monument area lies within the Crow Indian Reservation, one of seven Indian reservations in the state. The park is serviced by Interstate 90, 1 mile west, and U.S. 212, which connects the monument with the Black Hills and Yellowstone National Park. Crow Agency is 2 miles north. The nearest cities are Billings, Montana, 65 miles northwest, and Sheridan, Wyoming, 70 miles southeast.

Elevations in Custer Battlefield National Monument range from 3,200 to 3,400 feet. The low sloping terrain is characteristic of the sedimentary plains of southeastern Montana. The soil, typical of semiarid climates, is of a sugary, or clayless type, and supports several sorts of ground vegetation. These include bluestem grasses, grama grasses, buffalo grasses, clumps of sagebrush, and prickly pear plants. Since the advent of fencing, to prevent potential overgrazing, the ground cover essentially has remained the same as it was on June 25-26, 1876.

Soon after news of Custer's fate, the battlefield became a popular tourist attraction. Private and public pressure, in an attempt to commemorate and care for those who fell there, eventually led to the battlefield's official recognition and designation as a National Cemetery of the fourth class on August 1, 1879. Since its inception, Custer Battlefield National Monument has witnessed much executive and legislative action that has dealt with matters of additional acreage to a name change.

Continued pressure on the Federal Government proposing that a one mile square be designated a National Cemetery, led to the next government action concerning the battlefield. On December 7, 1886, President Grover Cleveland issued an Executive Order establishing the boundaries to enclose one square mile for the Custer Battlefield National Cemetery. The 50th anniversary of the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1926 sparked renewed interest and enthusiasm in the events surrounding the battle. A movement began at this time to acquire

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Park Development Interpretation
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

Cemetery 1886 -- Battle 1876 -- House 1894 -- Custer Monument 1881

SPECIFIC DATES Site Preservation and Interpretation-1876-1946 BUILDER/ARCHITECT

War Department

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The historic resources of Custer Battlefield National Monument have national significance in the area of military, politics/government, and as a historical interpreted/preserved site under Criterion A. A parcel of Custer Battlefield National Monument, Custer Battlefield Historic District, also possesses local significance in the area of architecture under Criterion C.

The Battle of the Little Bighorn, June 25-26, 1876, was one of numerous engagements between United States troops and Indians during this nation's westward expansion. A coalition of Sioux, Northern Cheyenne, and a few Arapaho won this battle decisively, yet it proved to be a final effort in defense of their once nomadic, independent existence. The white man was destined to emerge superior in the war of cultures.

The end of the Civil War witnessed a vigorous resumption of the westward movement by white settlers. These westerly traveling emigrants displayed a degree of apathy for sacred, Indian hunting grounds and/or terms of previous treaties. In 1868, in an attempt to remedy the tenuous situation, officials of the United States Government along with representatives of the Sioux -- led by Red Cloud -- Cheyenne, and other tribes of the Great Plains met at Fort Laramie, Wyoming. At this time, the two groups negotiated the Treaty of Fort Laramie. The major provisions of the 17-article treaty called for an end to hostilities between the parties, and stipulated that the country north of the North Platte River and east of the summit of the Big Horn Mountains shall be considered unceded Indian Territory, upon which no white persons were to settle or trespass without Indian consent.

Bands of Indians under Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse continued to roam from the Great Sioux Reservation to hunt on lands in the Yellowstone, Bighorn, and Powder Rivers region. By 1874, with the discovery of gold in the Black Hills, situated within the boundaries formed by the Fort Laramie treaty, the strained relations came to a head. Thousands of fortune hunters swarmed to the area, while like-numbers of Indians simultaneously departed for the hunting grounds to the northwest. The 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie was a dead letter.



9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See continuation sheet)



10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 764 acres

UTM REFERENCES

B  

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D  

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See continuation sheet)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Scott W. Loehr (Revised by Bruce Westerhoff)

ORGANIZATION

DATE _____

National Park Service -- Rocky Mountain Regional Office May 1985

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

655 Parfet

(303) 236-8675

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Denver

Colorado

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES ☒

NO

NONE

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE _____

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is ✓ National State Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE _____

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE _____

ATTEST:

DATE _____

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET DESCRIPTION

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 1

what is now termed the Reno-Benteen Battlefield. In that same year, an act was passed which authorized the Secretary of the Interior to acquire the land, not to exceed 160 acres, on the site of the battle between the Sioux Indians and the commands of Major Marcus A. Reno and Captain Frederick W. Benteen. Money, however, was not appropriated until 1928 for the land and a suitable marker.

On June 30, 1940, following 61 years of War Department administration, management and maintenance of the area passed to the hands of the National Park Service. Seven years ~~later~~^{before}, in 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had authorized, by Executive Order, the transfer of national cemeteries and military parks from the War Department to the Interior Department. The 7-year delay was caused by Executive Order 6228, which temporarily deferred provisions under the executive Reorganization Act. This matter was solved by Executive Order 8428, which revoked Executive Order 6228 and permanently transferred Custer Battlefield to the Department of the Interior. Under the National Park Service, preservation and interpretation of the battle site assumed greater importance. This shift in emphasis from the cemetery to the total historical significance of the battle led to the change from Custer National Cemetery to Custer Battlefield National Monument and was the last pertinent legislation (Public Law 322, March 22, 1946).

The Custer Battlefield or "Last Stand" site, is the best known and most highly visited area of the National Monument. The site, upon which are positioned the Custer Memorial and scattered marble markers depicting the location of Custer's fallen command, along with the National Cemetery and Superintendent's Lodge, contributes to the overall significance of this portion of Custer Battlefield National Monument. Also within the area are several buildings of a noncontributing nature. These include the museum and visitor center with surrounding parking area, National Park Service maintenance and housing area, and a concrete pump house constructed in 1938 on the bank of the Little Bighorn River.

Approximately 5 miles south of the "Last Stand" site is the Reno-Benteen Battlefield. Several rifle-pits and trenches, of the Reno-Benteen Memorial and a foot trail serve to enhance the

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CONTINUATION SHEET DESCRIPTION ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

interpretative value and significance of the site. The only noncontributing feature is a parking area located on two sides of the memorial.

Overall the battlefields maintain a high degree of visual integrity, with some visual intrusions to the west. Since the fire of 1983, the Custer Battlefield probably has assumed more of a feeling and appearance of the 1876 period. The cemetery and buildings in the developed area become very small in the background when one views the whole.

This nomination focuses on the historical resources, the archeological resources will be discussed in a separate nomination.

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CONTINUATION SHEET SIGNIFICANCE ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

On December 6, 1875, Edward P. Smith, Commissioner of ~~the~~¹⁶ Indian Affairs, ordered Indian agents to notify Sitting Bull's band and the other roaming tribes that they must return to their reservation before January 31, 1876, or face military consequences.

A combination of poor weather conditions and outright disregard for the order compelled the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, through the Secretary of the Interior, to uphold the ultimatum. The Army was requested to take appropriate military action. Thus, the stage was set for the Campaign of 1876.

By design, the 1876 campaign called for a three-pronged offensive, intended to force the roving tribes back to their respective reservations. While Colonel John Gibbon marched eastward from Fort Ellis, in western Montana, Brigadier General Alfred H. Terry, with another column, was to march westward from Fort Abraham Lincoln in Dakota Territory. Brigadier General George Crook and his troops would complete the envelopment by a march northward from Fort Fetterman, Wyoming. The first hitch in the plan came when General Crook was checked by Crazy Horse on the banks of Rosebud Creek, in mid-June. Suffering moderate casualties--10 men were killed and 21 men wounded--Crook withdrew south in the direction from where he came. To prevent the possibility of the Indians escaping southward, General Terry, not knowing what Crook was doing, dispatched the entire Seventh Cavalry, consisting of 700 men under Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer, to reconnoiter the area between the Rosebud and the Little Bighorn River.

On June 25, 1876, Colonel Custer sighted the Indian camp^s on the banks of the Little Bighorn River. Fearing that he had been discovered, Custer decided to attack immediately. In an attempt to encircle the Indian camp^s, Custer divided the Seventh Cavalry into three battalions. Companies H, D, and K under Captain Frederick W. Benteen were to reconnoiter the bluffs south of present-day Reno Creek, while Companies A, G, and M under the command of Major Marcus A. Reno, plus Companies C, F, E, I, and L under Custer marched on opposite banks of the creek, to converge upon the Indian camp^s in the valley of the Little Bighorn. Major Reno's advance on the Indian camp^s was checked successfully and his command retreated to a defensive position atop the bluffs east of the river, where they soon were joined by Captain Benteen's battalion. Colonel Custer and his command met fateful consequences. Though the exact route chosen and concrete details of the annihilation of Custer and his command remain a mystery, the event has served to immortalize the name of George A. Custer. Making what proved to be their costliest mistake, the coalition of

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CONTINUATION SHEET SIGNIFICANCE ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Indians disbanded following the victory and the numerous tribes went their own ways to find food. Within the year (1876), many of those Indians who had openly defied the 1875 ultimatum were returning to reservations to surrender. In July 1881, forsaking his vow never to return to the United States or to accept reservation restraints, Sitting Bull and a small group of followers returned from refuge in Canada and surrendered at Fort Buford, Dakota Territory. For all intents and purposes this capitulation of the inspirational leader of the Sioux that had annihilated Custer and his battalion marked the beginning of the end for the Indian leaders involved in the battle.

Under the supervision of the War Department, the development of the area which memorialized the Battle of the Little Bighorn centered upon the National Cemetery. Minimal attention was accorded to resources outside the cemetery boundaries. With the transfer of the National Monument to Park Service administration in 1940, emphasis shifted from the cemetery to the battlefields.

Edward S. Luce, Park Service superintendent for 16 years, laid the groundwork for the interpretive program at Custer Battlefield National Monument. This was in addition to the preservation and maintenance of the area.

Until 1893, minimal maintenance and care was under the jurisdiction of the post commander at Fort Custer. Andrew N. Grover, the first War Department Superintendent, resided in a tent and temporary frame house, later destroyed, until the completion of the two-story superintendent's lodge (1894). The Superintendent's Lodge, a two-story structure constructed of local red sandstone, rock-face on the exterior, and laid in a random ashlar pattern, is of local significance in that it represents the type of construction typical of the period. The building has had some alteration work, much of which was necessary, yet it retains much of its historical and architectural character.

Though architecturally significant only in the broadest sense of the term, the numerous, marble markers scattered about the battlefield add to the area's interpretive value and increase the realism of the event itself as well as contribute to the feeling, association, and setting of the cemetery. In addition, the civilian headstones located in the cemetery represent examples of funerary art which are unique to the region.

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The white marble markers set in place in April 1890, are the standard, military-issue gravestones, which are approximately 2' wide by 3' high with slightly curved tops. The marble markers superseded wood stakes which had served to mark, as accurately as possible, the places where the men of Companies C, E, F, I, and L met their deaths.

Future archeological excavation may yield additional information concerning the interpretation of events in the battle on June 25, 1876.

The battle of the Little Bighorn is also represented by a variety of archeological artifacts. The artifacts include the nonsystematically collected materials in the museum collection, those artifacts recovered during the systematic 1958, 1983, 1984, and 1985 investigations, and those artifacts not recovered and which still lie on the field. These artifacts are the physical evidence of the fight and thereby constitute an additional assemblage of information related to the historic record.

The artifacts were found to have been deposited in recognizable patterns which can be interpreted. The recognition of individual behavioral patterns led to the identification of unit patterns. These unit patterns were recognizable in the form of troop and Indian positions and movements.

The archeological artifacts, i.e., cartridge cases, bullets, bones, and equipment, all represent traces of past activity. This evidence was left behind in patterns that have been interpreted. These archeological investigations are the first of their kind to deal with a battle and a battlefield without focusing on specific features like fortifications. The application of modern firearms identification techniques to this historic situation is also a first in the study of historic sites. Finally the archeological data is an independent line of evidence which can be used in conjunction with the historical record to continue the study of the battle.

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL
CONTINUATION SHEET REFERENCES ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

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**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Continuation sheet GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Item number 10

Page 1

Custer Battlefield Historic District

Reno-Benteen Site

A 13 310750 5049540
B 13 311640 5048110
C 13 310560 5047400
D 13 309440 5048610

A 13 313880 5044200
B 13 314270 5044200
C 13 314280 5043800
D 13 314630 5043780
E 13 314640 5043370
F 13 314610 5043360
G 13 314600 5042960
H 13 314220 5042980
I 13 314250 5043390
J 13 313840 5043390

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Custer Battlefield Historic District

The Custer Battlefield National Mounment consists of two separate parts, the Custer Battlefield National Monument and the Reno-Benteen site, both of which are in Universal Transverse Mercator, (UTM) Zone 13.

The Custer Battlefield Historic District boundary is delineated by an irregular rectangle whose vertices are marked by the following UTM reference points: A 13 310750 5049540, B 13 311640 5048110, C 13 310560 5047400 and D 13 309440 5048610. The boundary follows the National Monument boundary.

The Reno-Benteen site is delineated by an irregular shaped area whose vertices are marked by the following UTM reference points: A 13 313880 5044200, B 13 314270 5044200, C 13 314280 5043800, D 13 314630 5043780, E 13 314640 5043370, F 13 314610 5043360, G 13 314600 5042960, H 13 314220 5942980, I 13 314250 5043390, and J 13 313840 5043390. The boundary follows the National Monument boundary. All of the land in both sections of the monument are considered significant for the historic scene, resources, and archeology. Archeological resources are not addressed in this nomination. The modern intrusions are listed as noncontributing.

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Custer Battlefield National Monument (Partial Inventory: Custer Battlefield
AND/OR COMMON Historic District)**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

N/A

N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Crow Agency

N/A VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
Second

STATE

Montana

CODE

30

COUNTY

Big Horn

CODE

003

3 CLASSIFICATION**CATEGORY**☒ DISTRICT☐ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT**OWNERSHIP**☒ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE☐ BOTH**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

N/A IN PROCESS

N/A BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS**ACCESSIBLE**☐ YES: RESTRICTED☒ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO**PRESENT USE**☐ AGRICULTURE☐ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☐ MUSEUM☒ PARK☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ OTHER:**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

National Park Service -- Rocky Mountain Regional Office

STREET & NUMBER

655 Parfet, P.O. Box 25287

CITY, TOWN

Denver

N/A VICINITY OF

STATE

Colorado

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.Big Horn
County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

N/A

CITY, TOWN

Hardin

STATE

Montana

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

List of Classified Structures

DATE

November 15, 1982

☒ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR

SURVEY RECORDS National Park Service, Rocky Mountain Regional Office

CITY, TOWN

Denver

STATE

Colorado

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT
☒ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Custer Battlefield Historic District is a somewhat polygonal plot of land adjacent to the east bank of the Little Bighorn River, and 17 miles south of Hardin, Montana. The town of Hardin, situated near the confluence of the Little Bighorn and Bighorn Rivers, is the commercial and residential center of Big Horn County.

Encircled by the Crow Indian Reservation, the physical characteristics of Custer Battlefield Historic District bear a striking resemblance to the conditions as they existed on June 25, 1876. The soil, of a sugary, almost clayless type, supports several types of plains ground cover. These include bluestem grass, grama grass, buffalo grass, clumps of sagebrush, yucca, greasewood, and prickly pear plants, all of which are typical of a semi-arid climate. In 1938, the first trees--all nonnative -- were introduced into the monument area. Overgrazing has not been a problem, because the Battlefield has been fenced since 1891. Due to this fact, it is one of the few areas within the region that retains its original grasses, with the exception of nonnative clover in the summer months.

Soon after the nation learned of the annihilation of ~~Lieutenant~~^{Lt.} Colonel George A. Custer and a battalion of the Seventh Cavalry at the Battle of the Little Bighorn, plans materialized for a memorial to those who were killed in the line of duty. Newspaper editors, high-ranking Army officers, private citizens, and relatives of men who died in the Battle, pressed Congress and the Army to establish a National Cemetery in the valley in order that the graves of the dead could be maintained properly. If this were not possible, an alternative called for all bodies to be removed to an existing National Cemetery. Either alternative was perceived as a remedy to the hideous reports, only partially true, that the battlefield was littered with half-buried and exposed remains of soldiers and animals.

On August 1, 1879, the battlefield officially was recognized and designated as a National Cemetery of the fourth class by General Order Number 78, Headquarters of the Army. This, was the date selected for establishment of the Custer Battlefield National Monument. The order also stated that the cemetery's boundaries would be defined upon completion of a future survey. While plans for transforming the battlefield into a National Cemetery were being formalized, a simultaneous action, spurred by Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs, called for erection of a stone memorial to the fallen troops. His initial plan specified a truncated stone

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Site Development
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

Superintendent's House 1894 Cemetery August 1, 1879
 SPECIFIC DATES BUILDER/ARCHITECT War Department
 Site Development and Interpretation 1876-1946
 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Custer Battlefield National Historical District, within the boundaries of Custer Battlefield National Monument, vividly interprets by the use of scattered, mute materials and memorials, the monument's nationally significant role and purpose under Criterion A. Also included under Criterion A at a national level is the role the monument has played as a historically interpreted/preserved site.

Although the Battle of the Little Bighorn was one of several White-Indian engagements during the United States' westward expansion, it was unquestionably the most dramatic and glorified battle on the Great Plains. The results of the battle carried with them far-reaching ramifications to Indian policy and affairs.

With its scattered marble gravestones and stone memorial, Custer Battlefield Historic District commemorates one of the closing chapters in a conflict of White-Indian cultures. Constant losers at the negotiating table, the Sioux and Cheyenne were led by Red Cloud (1864-1868), Sitting Bull, Gall, and Crazy Horse. This coalition, of mostly Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho with small representations from other Indian nations, claimed victory on June 25, 1876, but it was the last major effort by the Plains Indians to regain control of hunting grounds and home territory.

The Battle of the Little Bighorn was precipitated primarily by the increasing hostility of the Sioux and Cheyenne tribes to the invasion of the Black Hills by gold seekers. Because of Indian noncompliance with the 1875 ultimatum to return to their respective reservations, because of bad weather, communication delays, and general distrust, the 1876 campaign was organized by the Army, on request from the Secretary of the Interior to enforce the order. Coordinated by Lt. General Philip Sheridan, Commander, Division of the Missouri, the campaign called for an intricate three-pronged attack. The three "prongs" consisted of Brig. General George Crook's force from Fort




9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See continuation sheet)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 764 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A   

ZONE EASTING NORTHING




C   

Figure 1 is a schematic diagram of a coordinate system. It consists of a grid of points. The top row of points is labeled 'B' and the bottom row is labeled 'D'. The columns are labeled 'ZONE', 'EASTING', and 'NORTHING'. The 'B' row has points at the boundaries of the zones and eastings. The 'D' row has points at the boundaries of the zones and eastings, and also at the boundaries of the northings.

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See continuation sheet)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Scott W. Loehr (Revised by Bruce Westerhoff)

ORGANIZATION

DATE _____

National Park Service -- Rocky Mountain Regional Office May 1985

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

655 Parfet, Box 25287

(303) 236-8675

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

DenverColorado

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES ☒

NO_____

NONE_____

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is National State Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE _____

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE _____

DATE _____

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET DESCRIPTION ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

memorial, at an estimated cost of \$1,000. The memorial shaft was authorized in conjunction with the establishment of the National Cemetery, yet it was not erected until 1881. In the interim, a cordwood monument served a dual function: commemorating the dead and a marker of the common grave for the bones, both human and animal.

On December 7, 1886, President Grover Cleveland signed Executive Order 337443, establishing the boundary for the Custer Battlefield National Cemetery, roughly one square mile.

Though there exist several significant features relating to the Battle of the Little Bighorn within the district boundaries--Custer Hill--the site of the now famous "Last Stand"--remains the single most important and most heavily visited area connected with the fight. Site integrity of the district has been altered to some extent with the designation of the National Cemetery, plus the addition of a number of service buildings and objects. Several of the additions act to enhance the historical significance of the Custer Battlefield Historic District, while others serve a more functional purpose. On the whole, the visual integrity of the land remains good. The later additions become small in the background when one views the whole.

The following are to be considered contributing structures, sites, and buildings:

Battle Ridge and Custer Hill--Battle Ridge is the site where the men of Companies F, I, and L were slain. The bodies were reinterred in a common grave on Custer Hill, and white marble markers depict where they were originally found along Battle Ridge.

From Custer Hill--the site of the last stand--one can gaze out over most of the battlefield and the valley where the Indian villages ~~were~~ located. On the hillside, directly below the monument, a grouping of 52 marble tablets 2' wide by 3' high with slightly curved tops depict where the bodies of Custer's battalion were found.

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CONTINUATION SHEET DESCRIPTION ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

The stone monument, the Custer Memorial, memorializing those who lost their lives in the battle of the Little Bighorn, is also on Custer Hill. The specifications, developed by General Meigs, called for a truncated stone pyramid 11 1/2' high and 6' wide at the base, tapering to 3 1/2' at the top. The four sides of the shaft were to display the names of the fallen officers, civilians, scouts, and enlisted men. The contract to supply the memorial was granted in February 21, 1879, to the Mount Auburn Marble and Granite Works, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The memorial was constructed of three parts, the base and two pyramidal sections.

Two hundred sixty-one names are cut on the four faces of the two upper stones. The face of one side of the base bears the following inscription: "In memory of officers and soldiers who fell near this place fighting with the Seventh United States Cavalry against Sioux Indians, on the 25th and 26th of June, A.D. 1876."

Following a difficult cross-country trip, the Custer Memorial was set in place in July 1881. Lieutenant C.F. Roe and Troop M, Second Cavalry, were ordered to erect the memorial, plus dig a trench around the base, then reinter the remains of the Custer dead therein. This memorial is on the crest of a hill, six feet from where Custer's remains were found. In 1890 the edges of the monument were beveled because of massive chipping.

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CONTINUATION SHEET DESCRIPTION

ITEM NUMBER 7

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Custer Battlefield National Cemetery---Shortly after Custer Battlefield was set aside by Executive Order on December 7, 1886, an active military cemetery of 6.21 acres was established. Originally intended for the interment of Indian War casualties, the initial design was soon altered to accommodate the burials of veterans of the Spanish-American War, both World Wars, and the Vietnam conflict. Some Indian scouts are also buried in the National Cemetery. Among those interred who possess historical significance are Captain William Judd Fetterman and his entire command, who were killed in the Fetterman Fight, December 7, 1866; Curley, one of Custer's Indian scouts; and Lieutenant John J. Crittenden, whose body remained in its battlefield grave for 56 years, until 1932, when his body was removed to the National Cemetery.

Presently, the cemetery is divided into four large sections, Section A primarily consists of veterans of the 2nd, 5th, and 7th United States Cavalry, plus those who fell at the Battle of Bear Paw Mountains, 1877. A monument to those involved at Bear Paw Mountain is in this section.

In addition to the veterans of the Spanish-American War, both World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam, Sections B and C contain men from several troops of the 7th Cavalry. Finally, men of the 5th

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Continuation sheet DESCRIPTION

Item number 7

Page 4

United States Cavalry, Companies B, C, G, and I are buried in Section D. With the exception of spouses, in reserved spaces, the cemetery is presently closed to burials.

Superintendent's House-----Constructed in 1894 by the War Department, the Superintendent's House was the first permanent building in Custer Battlefield National Monument. The two-story stone structure, with full basement, measures 30' square. The foundation walls are constructed of local red sandstone, faced on both sides, with the exterior plastered with Portland cement mortar. The exterior walls of local red sandstone are laid in a random ashlar pattern with raised beaded pointing.

The three-bay north porch measures 21'6" by 7'. The wood floor has been replaced with a concrete slab; the stone piers have been replaced by a solid stone wall; the 5" square wood columns have been cut off and reset in concrete pedestals; and the original wood baluster replaced with a single horizontal 2" metal pipe imbedded in the pedestals. The centrally located common bond brick chimney is also a structural element. The 24" x 36" chimney has four 9" square flues and extends above the ridge roughly 4 feet with a 5-inch deep sandstone cap.

Flat voussoired arches are over all window and door openings and segmentally cut at the soffits. Two and three voussoirs in each arch form the keystones. Sills and basement window lintels are of broken-face

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CONTINUATION SHEET DESCRIPTION ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 5

stone. The exterior doors--of two-panel and two-light construction with corner block trim, symetrically molded--are original. The exterior windows are muntinned double-hung sash with four-over-four lights on the first floor and six-over-six lights on the second floor. The south six-light sash and the original exterior office door have been replaced with modern sash, thus producing a distinct difference in muntin profiles. There is a nine-light round attic window on each gable facade.

The building possesses a gable roof which runs north/south, while the porch has a 1/2 hip roof. The ridges and hips are finished with metal hip roll. The roofs are covered with cedar shingles. The eaves overhand 2' and return to the gable ends 1'13". The exposed rafter ends and gable brackets are rounded. The exposed roof-boarding is 7/8' x 4" matched and beaded battens laid parallel to the ridge.

The first and second floor stairway and the woodwork is original and unaltered. The stairs have a run of 10 1/2", rise of 7 1/2", with rounded nosings and molded underneath. The two balusters are turned 1 1/4", supporting a 2 1/2-inch molded rail and anchored to a 5" x 5" chamfered and molded newell post. The stairway has two quarter turns, the first with a landing, and the second with winders. The basement stairway is a straight run with no risers.

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CONTINUATION SHEET DESCRIPTION ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 6

The Superintendent's House is situated at the northern edge of the cemetery with the main cemetery gates to the northeast. The building retains all of its historical integrity and a majority of its architectural integrity. It remains in good condition. Constructed along with the Superintendent's House were several out-buildings of similar construction. They were located under one roof of a one-and-one-half-story structure. They are: a privy, a stable, and a large drive-in storage area. In 1934, a stone garage was built at a cost of \$3,800. Plans were made, in 1964, to enlarge the cemetery, dictating that the stable and garage be destroyed, destruction commenced that same year.

Flagstaff-----The steel staff, located in the center of the national cemetery, was erected in 1908, replacing the original wood staff (1896), which was destroyed by lightning in 1907.

The following is a list of noncontributing buildings and objects:

Museum and Visitor Center-----Built in 1950-51 by a Billings, Montana, firm--Boespflug Construction Company--this one-story, frame building, with basement, rests on a foundation of poured concrete which is covered with asphalt and cork tile. The walls, both interior and exterior, are constructed of cinder block masonry, with the interior walls finished with plaster and paint. The ceiling is finished with plaster and acoustical tiles. Roof material consists of tar and gravel. In 1955, an entrance vestibule was added to the existing museum. The building is serviced from the north by a large parking lot.

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CONTINUATION SHEET DESCRIPTION

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The site has lost much of its integrity through the intrusion of the road and parking lot.

In the 1960s several buildings and improvements were completed. Among the structures built were: a second superintendent's residence, two duplex employee residences, a Rostrum, and an utility building. An underground sprinkler system was installed in the cemetery in 1961. All powerlines were also put underground in the early 1960s.

Structures that the Visitor-Center replaced in 1951 were: comfort stations, a checking station, the office, and one of the employee residences. Also removed in 1965 was an employee's garage and gas station.

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CONTINUATION SHEET SIGNIFICANCE

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 1

Fetterman in Wyoming, Colonel John Gibbon's command from Fort Ellis in Montana, and General Alfred Terry's troops, of which Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer and the entire United States Seventh Cavalry were a part, from the Dakota Territory. The three columns were to converge on the Indians thought to be in southeastern Montana.

To prevent an Indian escape to the south, ~~Brig.~~ General Terry ordered the entire Seventh Cavalry, consisting of roughly 700 men under Colonel Custer, to march up Rosebud Creek and approach the Little Bighorn River from the east. Custer located the Indian camp on June 25, 1876. Miscalculating the number of Indian warriors, Custer split his regiment into three battalions. Companies H, D, and K under Captain Frederick W. Benteen were to reconnoiter the bluffs south of present-day Reno Creek, while Companies C, E, F, I, and L under Custer marched on the opposite bank of that creek eventually to converge upon the Indian camp in the valley of the Little Bighorn. Nearing the Little Bighorn River, Custer abruptly turned north. From this point on, the events are interpreted from Indian warrior recollections, thus creating some inconsistencies as to what happened.

Much controversy and many unanswered questions surround this American military disaster and its central figure George A. Custer. In 1861, following this graduation from the United States Military Academy as last in his class, Custer was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Second United States Cavalry. Custer's displays of courage and meritorious actions during the Civil War quickly attracted the attention of his superiors. By the age of 23, Custer had become a brigadier general, thus making him one of the youngest men ever to hold that rank in the history of the United States Army. Rapid promotions and brash behavior did not endear the general to all his colleagues. After the large volunteer Army was disbanded in 1866, General Custer was assigned to the newly formed Seventh Cavalry as its lieutenant colonel. It was the duty of the Seventh Cavalry to quell hostile Indians who made it a practice of harassing white settlers in Kansas, Nebraska, and the Indian Territory.

The man immortalized by the disaster of the Little Bighorn was somewhat of an enigma. When not on tours of duty, Custer passed the time reading, writing, socializing, and hunting. Whether evicting white trespassers from Indian reservation, or risking, and subsequently losing, his life in fighting against Indians, Custer symbolized the traditional devotion of the United States Cavalry.

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CONTINUATION SHEET SIGNIFICANCE ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Until 1893, the minimal care and maintenance Custer Battlefield National Cemetery received came at the orders of the post commander at nearby Fort Custer. In July 1893, Andrew N. Grover was appointed as the first resident superintendent of the cemetery. Unfortunately, provision for housing has been overlooked. While his new quarters were being constructed, Grover resided in a tent, and later was afforded a temporary frame house. The Superintendent's House, a two-story building, constructed of local red sandstone, rock-face on the exterior, and laid in a random pattern, is of local significance in that it represents the only example of military architecture in the vicinity, and the type of construction and craftsmanship typical of the period. The building has had some alteration work, much of which was necessary, yet it maintains much of its historical and architectural character.

Though architecturally significant only in the broadest sense of the term, the numerous, marble markers scattered about the battlefield add to the area's interpretative value and increase the realism of the event itself, as well as contribute to the feeling, association, and setting of the cemetery. The white marble markers superseded wooden stakes which had served to mark, as accurately as possible, the places where the men of Companies C, E, F, I, and L had met their death. Set in place in April 1890, the standard, military-issue gravestones are approximately 2' wide by 3' high, with slightly curved tops.

Under the supervision of the War Department for a period of 61 years, development primarily centered upon the national cemetery. Minimal attention was given to the maintenance outside the cemetery boundaries. With the transfer of the national monument to National Park Service administration in 1940, emphasis shifted from the cemetery to the battlefields. At this time, an attempt was made to gain a greater understanding of what transpired on June 25, 1876, and thus, convey a more accurate interpretation of the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

In accordance with development and policies of the Organic Act of 1916, the National Park Service began to preserve and safeguard the entire Custer Battlefield National Monument. Repairs to the Custer Memorial and the resetting of many of the fallen markers were initiated on a regular basis. Interpretive signing and marking of Custer Battlefield was in place in 1947.

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL

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Continuation sheet GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Item number 10

Page 1

Custer Battlefield Historic District

UTM's

A 13 310750 5049540
B 13 311640 5048110
C 13 310560 5047400
D 13 309440 5048610

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Custer Battlefield Historic District boundary is delineated by an irregular rectangle whose vertices are marked by the following UTM reference points:
A 13 310750 5049540, B 13 311640 5048110, C 13 310560 5047400, and D 13 309440 5048610.
The boundary follows the National Monument boundary.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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MAR 18 1987

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Custer Battlefield National Monument (Partial Inventory: Reno-Benteen
AND/OR COMMON Battlefield)

N/A

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

N/A

N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Crow Agency

N/A VICINITY OF

Second

STATE

CODE
30COUNTY
Big HornCODE
003

Montana

3 CLASSIFICATION**CATEGORY**☐ DISTRICT☐ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☒ SITE☐ OBJECT**OWNERSHIP**☒ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE☐ BOTH**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

N/A IN PROCESS

N/A BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS☐ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS**ACCESSIBLE**☐ YES: RESTRICTED☒ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO**PRESENT USE**☐ AGRICULTURE☐ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☐ MUSEUM☒ PARK☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ OTHER:**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

National Park Service — Rocky Mountain Regional Office

STREET & NUMBER

655 Parfet Street P.O. Box 25287

CITY, TOWN

Denver

N/A VICINITY OF

STATE

Colorado

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Big Horn

County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

N/A

CITY, TOWN

Hardin

STATE

Montana

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

List of Classified Structures

DATE

November 15, 1982

☒ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

National Park Service — Rocky Mountain Regional Office

CITY, TOWN

Denver

STATE

Colorado

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT

☒ GOOD

☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED

☐ RUINS

☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED

☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE

☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Reno-Benteen Battlefield, or Defense Site, comprises a portion of the Multiple Resource nomination for Custer Battlefield National Monument. The Reno-Benteen Battlefield, a 162-acre elevated area, is the last major addition to the land area administered at Custer Battlefield. It is situated within several hundred yards of the east bank of the Little Bighorn River, in Big Horn County, Montana. Billings, Montana, and Sheridan, Wyoming, are approximately 65 miles northwest and 70 miles southeast, respectively, of the monument site. The Reno-Benteen Site itself lies five miles south of Custer Battlefield proper.

Vegetation in the immediate area consists primarily of bluestem grass, grama grass, buffalo grass, clumps of sagebush, yucca, greasewood, and prickly pear plants, with the exception of nonnative clover in the summer months, all typical of a semiarid climate. The erection of a fence around the entire site in 1954, solved the problem of overgrazing, thus today it remains one of the few areas in the region where the original grasses are relatively undisturbed. The ground cover is critical to the interpretation of the battlefield site, because it is believed to have played an important role in the Little Bighorn Battle. According to Sioux and Cheyenne participants, the Indians employed the tall grasses and ravines as cover to advance slowly on the defensive troop positions.

As the 50th anniversary of the Battle of the Little Bighorn approached in 1926, both private and public interests pushed for legislation authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to acquire land and erect a suitable monument on the site of the battle with the Sioux and allied Indians. The land and monument were to commemorate the commands of Major Marcus A. Reno and Captain Frederick W. Benteen. In the same year as the battle's 50th anniversary, legislation was authorized for purchase of the land, yet funds for the purchase of the 162 acres were not made available for another two years. The site remained under the care of the Indian Bureau, and in 1930, supervision and maintenance of the Reno-Benteen Battlefield was transferred to the War Department. During that same year, a rough road was cut from the Custer Battlefield proper, five miles south, to the Reno-Benteen Battlefield. In 1941 the road was graveled.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES Battlefield 1876---Monument 1929
 Site Interpretation 1926-1946 BUILDER/ARCHITECT N/A

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Reno-Benteen Battlefield is one of the areas within Custer Battlefield National Monument which testifies to the monument's nationally significant role in military and interpretation of a historic site under Criterion A.

In 1868, after 2 years of fighting between the Sioux, led by Red Cloud, and Army forces, a treaty was negotiated at Fort Laramie, Wyoming. As a result of this treaty, the territory north of the North Platte River, east of the summits of the Big Horn Mountains, and west of the Missouri River, would be uncaded Indian Territory. The Great Sioux Indian Reservation lay east of the uncaded land. Whites could trespass only with Indian consent, they could not settle.

By 1874, Indian bands were hunting off the great reservation, and whites were trespassing to the Black Hills in pursuit of gold, thus causing tensions between the respective groups.

On December 6, 1875, the Commissioner for Indian Affairs, Edward P. Smith, issued an ultimatum, through Indian Agents, for all Indians to return to the reservations by January 31, 1876. All Indians off the reservation, after that date, would be considered hostile and face military consequences. Bad weather, communication delays, and general mistrust resulted in large numbers of Indians being off the reservation and in noncompliance of the 1875 order.

The 1876 campaign was organized by the Army on request of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, through the Secretary of the Interior. The 1876 campaign involved a three-pronged offensive designed to force the Indians back into the reservation and overcome the Native Americans.

One of the three forces headed by Brig. General Alfred H. Terry, commander, Department of the Dakota, was stationed at Fort Abraham

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See continuation sheet)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 162 acres

UTM REFERENCES

B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See continuation sheet)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Scott W. Loehr (revised by Bruce Westerhoff)

DATE _____

May 1985

TELEPHONE

(303) 236-8675

STATE

Colorado

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

NO_____

NONE_____

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is National ☒ National ☐ State ☐ Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

DATE _____

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DATE _____

DATE _____

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A memorial, the Reno-Benteen Mounment, serves to commemorate this phase of the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Again, the 50th anniversary of the battle acted as the impetus for erecting a shrine at the site. Pressure was brought to bear upon those public officials who were perceived as willing sponsors of legislation, calling for some sort of memorial to those men who participated in the desperate defense. In 1929 following three years of failure, funds, not to exceed \$2,500, were appropriated for the erection of a suitable memorial and historical tablet.

An immediate cause of the delays and failures stemmed from the objections voiced by veterans of the battle and Indian Wars, who did not desire to see a memorial dedicated to Major Marcus A. Reno, whose actions in the battle were subject to controversy. The impasse was solved by the decision not to place Major Reno's name upon the marker. Today the name of Marcus A. Reno fails to appear on the marker. A contract for the memorial went to the Livingston Marble and Granite Works of Livingston, Montana. The Reno-Benteen Memorial was erected in July 1929.

The successful effort to preserve the historic character of the terrain, plus preservation/restoration of several rifle pits and trenches, attests to the overall integrity of the Reno-Benteen Battlefield. In its present condition, the site serves as an ominous reminder of the events of June 25-26, 1876.

The site has some lose of its integrity through intrusion of the road and parking lot and a visual intrusion to the west outside of the boundary. However, on the whole, the visual integrity of the battlefield is very good. Most of the rise where the parking lot is located was leveled during construction.

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Continuation sheet SIGNIFICANCE

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Lincoln, Dakota Territory. With two companies of the Seventeenth United States Infantry, one company of the Sixth United States Infantry, and the Seventh United States Cavalry—which included George A. Custer, Marcus A. Reno, and Frederick W. Benteen—General Terry marched west in May 1876 ultimately to rendezvous with the other two forces and subdue the Sioux and Cheyenne Nations.

Detached on orders from General Terry, and under the charge of ~~Lieutenant Colonel~~ George A. Custer, the Seventh Cavalry reached the mouth of Rosebud Creek about noon on June 21. As planned, Custer led the Seventh Cavalry up Rosebud Creek, following an Indian trail reported by Major Reno and his Indian scouts. The objective was to reunite with ~~General~~ Gibbon's column then making its way ~~up~~ the Yellowstone River and isolate the Indians between the two columns.

Fearing that he had been sighted by Indians, Custer altered the plan, perceiving it urgent to attack immediately. A delay of one night might allow the Indians adequate time to abandon the Little Bighorn region. On June 25, Custer divided his command into three battalions: Companies H, D, and K under Captain Benteen were to reconnoiter the bluffs south of the present Reno Creek, while Companies A, G, and M under the command of Major Reno, along with Companies C, E, F, I, and L under Custer, marched along opposite banks of the Reno Creek to attack the Indian camp in the valley of the Little Bighorn. Sighting a portion of the Indian encampment when they were almost upon it, Major Reno on orders from Custer, crossed the Little Bighorn, advanced down the Little Bighorn, and struck the southern end of the Indian camp. Outflanked by the defending warriors, Reno retreated in disorder to the river and ultimately took up a defensive position on the bluffs beyond. Reno's beleaguered troops eventually were aided by Captain Benteen, who had pushed forward hastily under written orders from Custer to "Come on, Big Village, be quick, bring packs." For two days the companies of Reno and Benteen battled sporadic Indian attacks. Late afternoon on June 26 the attacks ceased as the Indian camp packed up and moved off in the direction of the Big Horn Mountains. At the end of the two-day siege, 53 men were dead and 59 wounded from the Reno-Benteen battalions. Five miles northeast, Custer and the five companies under his command had met their deaths.

Under the administration of the War Department, for 61 years, development centered primarily upon the National Cemetery. Minimal attention was accorded to maintenance outside the cemetery

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boundaries. With the transfer of the National Monument to National Park Service administration in 1940, emphasis shifted from the cemetery to the battlefields. In accordance with development and use policies set forth in the Organic Act of 1916, the National Park Service began to preserve and safeguard the entire Custer Battlefield National Monument, and, furthermore, make the area and its facilities available to the public through development and interpretation. Following Park Service developmental policies, fencing of the Reno-Benteen Battlefield was conducted. Presently, a pamphlet and self-guided trail are employed to create a greater understanding of this portion of the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

Future archeological excavation may yield additional information concerning the interpretation of events in the battle on June 25-26, 1876. An archeological survey took place in 1958 by Mr. Robert Bray. An extensive survey began in May of 1985. The results of the survey, supervised by the Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, Nebraska, will be evaluated and appropriate documentation will be forwarded to the National Register of Historic Places.

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Reno-Benteen Site

UTM's

A 13 313880 5044200
B 13 314270 5044200
C 13 314280 5043800
D 13 314630 5043780
E 13 314640 5043370
F 13 314610 5043360
G 13 314600 5042960
H 13 314220 5042980
I 13 314250 5043390
J 13 313840 5043390

The Reno-Benteen site is delineated by an irregular shaped area whose vertices are marked by the following UTM reference points: A 13 313880 5044200, B 13 314270 5044200, C 13 314280 5043800, D 13 314630 5043780, E 13 314640 5043370, F 13 314610 5043360, G 13 314600 5042960, H 13 314220 5942980, I 13 314250 5043390, and J 13 313840 5043390. The boundary follows the National Mounment boundary. All of the land in both sections of the monument are considered significant for the historic scene, resources, and archeology. Archeological resources are not addressed in this nomination. The modern intrusions are listed as noncontributing.

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Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Custer Battlefield National Monument MRA

State Big Horn Co., MT

for COVER William B. Bushong 5/1/87

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

1. Custer Battlefield Historic
District

for Keeper

Attest

William B. Bushong
5/1/87

2. Reno--Benteen Battlefield

for Keeper

Attest

William B. Bushong
5/1/87

3.

Keeper

Attest

4.

Keeper

Attest

5.

Keeper

Attest

6.

Keeper

Attest

7.

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Attest

8.

Keeper

Attest

9.

Keeper

Attest

10.

Keeper

Attest